Minutes of the convention of elders and deacons of the Synod of N.C. at Salisbury, ... 1859

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OF THE

CONVENTION OF ELDERS AND DEACONS

OF THE

Synod of North-Carolina,

AT SALISBURY:

December 13th and 14th, 1859.

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MINUTES

Of the Convention of Elders and Deacons.

The Convention of Elders and Deacons of the Synod of North-Carolina, met in the Presbyterian Church in Salisbury on Tuesday evening, December 13th, A. D., 1859, and was organized by electing Professor Charles Phillips, of Chapel Hill, President, and Jesse H. Lindsay, of Greensboro', Vice President. Dr. E. Nye Hutchison of Charlotte, and A. R. McDonald of Carthage, were appointed Secretaries. Prayer was offered by Calvin H. Wiley.

The Convention being regularly organized, the following Delegates were reported as present.

FROM ORANGE PRESBYTERY.

Ralph Gorrell and Jesse H. Lindsay, Elders, Greensboro'; Charles Phillips Elder, Chapel Hill; Calvin H. Wiley, Elder, Alamance; Malcom Shaw, Elder, High Point; Dr. C. L. Payne, Elder, Lexington; Wm. P. Morrow, Elder, Bethlehem.

DEACONS PRESENT.

L. E. Heartt, Raleigh; R. E. Blair, High Point; Alexander Hege, Lexington; William Bingham, Bethlehem.

FAYETTEVILLE PRESBYTERY.

ELDERS PRESENT.

James Martine, Fayetteville; George Chadburn, First Church, Wilmington; John McKinnon, St. Pauls; A. R. McDonald, Carthage.

DEACONS PRESENT.

J. B. Ferguson, Fayetteville; James Price, Second Church, Wilmington.

CONCORD PRESBYTERY.

ELDERS PRESENT.

D. H. Patterson, Back Creek; John M Lawrance, Back Creek; C.

Flemming, Bethpage; S. Winecoff, Bethpage; E. W. Kimmons, Bethpage; N. Johnson, Bethpage; J. F. Bell, Statesville; John Steel, Statesville; E. B. Stinson, Statesville; Ebenezer McNeely, Bethesda; E. R. Harris, Poplar Tent; John Walker, Sharon; John H. McDowell, Steel Creek; W. P. Brown, Steel Creek; S. J. Berryhill, Steel Creek; Thos. B. Price, Steel Creek; J. K. Graham, Thyatira; John R. Davidson, Hopewell; Sandy McKinley, Rocky River; R. J. McDowell, Unity; A. Houp, Fifth Creek; F. A. Burk, Third Creek; J. G. Ramsey and J. T. Johnson, Third Creek; A. C. McIntosh, Taylorsville; T. S. Boyd, Taylorsville; G. L. Campbell, Paw Creek; J. A. Hill, Bethany; W. S. Moore, Morganton; Michael Brown, Wm. Murdoch, D. A. Davis, Dr. A. Long, Thos. McNeely, J. J. Bruner, Salisbury; R. A. McNeely, R. H. Barnett, Sugar Creek; Richard Thomas, Milas Gheen, Franklin; Dr. E. Nye Hutchison, Charlotte; S. S. Trott, (Rowan Co.,) Franklin; J. M. Query, L. C. Kirkpatrick, Rocky River.

DEACONS PRESENT.

Jacob B. Goodman, Back Creek; S. M. Furr, J. M. Killough, Bethpage; J. R. Adams, H. B. Reese, Statesville; T. J. Witherspoon, Bethesda; J. S. Collins, Steel Creek; M. Boger, A. M. Neal, Prospect; R. W. Johnson, John C. Ross, Poplar Tent; Dr. J. J. Summerel, John D. Brown, J. S. McCubbins, J. A. Bradshaw, J. D. Ramsey, Salisbury; J. E. Sample, Providence; J. Miller, Thyatira.

On motion, all Ministers of the Gospel, were requested to sit as corresponding members of the Convention. Revd's S. Frontis, W. W. Pharr, W. L. Miller, F. H. Johnston, R. H. Lafferty and S. B. O. Wilson took their seats.

On motion, the President appointed C. H. Wiley, James Martine and R. J. McDowell, Elders—and T. B. Price, L. D. Heartt, and J. D. Brown, Deacons, a committee to prepare business for the Convention.

Dr. E. Nye Hutchison read the following communication, which was approved and adopted by the Convention, viz:

This Convention deeply impressed with the importance of genuine extensive *Revivals of Religion*, as one of the means of growth and prosperity in the Church, and as precious visitations of God, to be greatly desired by his people; do respectfully solicit the attention of their brethren, the ministers of the Gospel, the officers of our churches, and the private members thereof to this great matter.

We do not feel called upon to give any testimony to the value and desirableness of these gracious outpourings of the Spirit of God upon the Churches. This testimony is written at large in the past history of the Church, and it has been made more distinct and abundant by the very merciful dealing of God with his Church in the day and land in which we live. We have passed through years which were years of the right hand of the Most High. Many of us, who now hold office in the house of God, were called into the Kingdom of our Lord, in these seasons of Revival; and it has been the privilege of some of us, to come unto this Holy Convocation, from the midst of the praises of those who have just been brought out of great darkness into light, and the prayers and tears of those who are earnestly seeking the salvation of their souls.

With a devout and grateful recognition of God's great mercy to us in past years, in the many precious refreshings which he has granted to our churches; this Convention would suggest, to all our brethren, that these blessings do but offer a basis for repeated and earnest supplications for fresh and still larger outpourings of God's Holy Spirit. God is honored by our warm and sincere gratitude. He is honored, also, by our enlarged desires, founded upon our experience of his mercy; and we believe is ready to give unto us his Spirit, according to the measure of our faith and desire. Shall we not look for, and pray for, more abundant effusions of the Holy Ghost than we have yet witnessed? Shall we be faithless and lukewarm, with so many evidences of the great goodness of our God, around us and within us?

Constrained by all these things, and by the motives which spring from them, and humbled by a sense of our past unfaithfulness, we do now resolve in dependence upon the grace of God, that we will pray more earnestly and constantly, that he would grant unto all our churches, genuine, pure, and powerful Revivals of Religion, and that this Revival may begin in our own hearts we do hereby set apart one hour every day during the Sessions, to be observed as an hour of prayer to Almighty God for the gift of his Holy Spirit, that His divine influences may rest upon our hearts, upon our brethren, the Elders and Deacons throughout the State, and upon all the churches, and that the work of God may be greatly revived, saints quickened, and sinners saved.

It was moved and seconded that the Preamble and Resolution be

adopted. Pending this motion, the Convention was addressed by C. H. Wiley, Professor C. Phillips, James Martine, Dr. E. Nye Hutchison, Wm. Murdoch, Davis, McDonald and others. The motion was carried unanimously.

Ralph Gorrell Esqr. and Jesse H. Lindsay gave very interesting accounts of the Revival of Religion, now going on in Greensboro', and asked the prayers of the Convention in behalf of the Pastor and people, that God would continue to pour out his Spirit upon them, until all shall be brought under its gracious influences.

The Committee on business, was excused from attending the exercises of the Convention, until it was ready to report.

On motion, the Convention adjourned until 9 o'clock Wednesday morning. Prayer by James Martine of Fayetteville.

WEDNESDAY MORNING 9 o'clock.

Convention met and spent one hour in prayer for the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Churches, the revival of genuine religion, and the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom. The exercises of the hour were delightful and impressive. The Convention was led in prayer by A. R. McDonald, William Bingham, William Murdoch, John Walker and E. Nye Hutchison, and a short address was made by Jesse H. Lindsay.

The Roll was called and several additional names of new delegates entered thereon. Messrs. R. J. McDowell, John Walker, Charles Phillips, John R. Davidson and Abner Houp addressed the Convention on the condition of the Church and the causes thereof.

Professor Phillips gave a very interesting and instructive exposition of the duties pertaining to the eldership, and showed most clearly from the Old and New Testaments that it was the duty of the elders to *feed* the flock of Christ. On motion the Convention took a recess until 1-2 past 2 o'clock.

AFTERNOON SESSION.

The President took the chair at 1-2 past 2 o'clock, and called the Convention to order.

After some prefatory remarks, Calvin H. Wiley, Chairman of the Committee on business submitted the following Report and Resolutions.

The Committee appointed to prepare business for the Convention of Elders and Deacons of the Presbyterian church of North Carolina, respectfully report:

That while they find many subjects of interest which present themselves for consideration, they deem it most important to press upon the attention of this body the Reports and Resolutions adopted by the Conventions held in Greensboro' and Raleigh.

These Reports contain full, intelligent and satisfactory statements of the questions therein discussed; and the Resolutions embody the substance of these statements and other important matters in brief, explicit, and comprehensive forms.

The purpose, therefore, of your Committee, in again calling up these things, is not to add to or to change what has already been so well said; nor is it merely to offer these Reports and Resolutions for a formal reaffirmation by this meeting.

The subjects embraced in these proceedings are numerous, and of the very gravest importance; and while the action of the meetings in question has been the means of awakening, in our Synod, a new and general interest in regard to them, your Committee are impressed with the belief that their spirit and scope are yet but imperfectly understood.

It is greatly to be desired, that they be not only understood in theory by all the members of the church, but that the principles involved be reduced to regular and universal practice; and hence the first and the leading question which presents itself to this Convention, is, the means of attaining such a result.

This body is mainly composed of persons who were not members of either of the former Conventions; and, hence, one of the most obvious and practical methods of extending a knowledge of the subjects referred to, and of widening and deepening the feeling in regard to them, is to open them for a fresh discussion on this occasion.

Your Committee, therefore, recommend, that all these questions be now brought under review, and that the members of this body be called on for an expression of sentiment in regard to them, and for information as to the extent to which they have influenced the action of the churches which they represent.

Your Committee recommend that the Report and Resolutions refer-

red to, be also formally adopted and published by this body as part of its proceedings; and that this meeting devise some systematic method, for having the principles embraced, carried into general and constant action.

One simple and practicable plan for the accomplishment of this work occurs to your Committee, to wit:

That the matters alluded to, and also any new subjects embraced in the action of this Convention, be referred, for consideration, to all the Elders and Deacons in the State, with an earnest request that they be brought to the knowledge and attention of all the members of the church; carefully and prayerfully examined and discussed; and that the feeling, opinion, and action in regard to them be reported to succeeding Conventions, if any should be held.

And that this plan may be the more effectual, and the faith and christian graces of the members enlivened, your Committee believe that such meetings as this, and numerously attended, should be held every year, or as often as the way may be open for this purpose; and in this connection your Committee would refer the members of this body, and all the members of the Presbyterian church in North-Carolina, to the remarkable language of the prophet in the 16, 17, and 18 verses of the third chapter of Malachi:

"Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard *it*, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name."

" And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."

"Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not."

The subjects embraced in the proceedings of the former Conventions were: 1. The scarcity of Ministers in our Synod. 2. Vacant and feeble churches, and the importance of employing travelling evangelists to supply these and vacant fields. 3. Duties of pastors and lay officers of the church in regard to the religious instruction of the colored population. 4. Attendance of Elders on meetings of Presbyteries and Synods. 5. The authority and importance of the office of Deacon. 6. Spiritual duties of Ruling Elders. 7. Parental authority and family disci-

pline. 8. Family worship. 9. The observance of the Sabbath. 10. Regular Domestic Missionary labor by Pastors and Stated Supplies. 11. The establishment of a fund for the support of aged and disabled ministers. 12. A more careful and prayerful examination of candidates for the privileges of church membership. 13. The importance and usefulness of the *North-Carolina Presbyterian*, and the duty of sustaining it.

Your Committee cannot but believe, that if all these subjects were thoroughly understood, and a just appreciation of them reflected in the action of the whole church, a new and glorious era in its history would immediately begin; and they feel that their first duty on this occasion, is to press these matters on the attention of this Convention; and earnestly suggest, that they be again prayerfully considered by this whole body, and solemnly commended to the consideration of all the Elders and Deacons in the State.

The great duty of the church is not to develope new ideas, but to proclaim, practice and enforce eternal and unchangeable truths; and it would be hardly worth the while to hold these Conventions of Elders and Deacons, if their only fruit were to be the passing of new resolutions at each successive meeting.

Let us rather see to it, that our own hearts and minds are thoroughly imbued with what we recommend; and let us continually strive to press these recommendations upon the lives and actions of all our brethren.

It would be time most profitably employed to continue to hold these meetings for devotional exercises, to enable the members to stir up the gifts of each other, and to devise ways and means to put into universal and constant practice what has already been recommended; and your Committee cannot but think, that it would be especially injudicious at this time, to offer many new subjects for the consideration of their brethren, when the important matters already brought to the attention of these Conventions are, as yet, but imperfectly understood and appreciated.

They would, however, respectfully suggest as additional topics demanding immediate, universal and permanent attention, the following subjects, to wit: (1.) A more general, earnest and systematic effort to enforce the sacredness of the Sabbath rest, and to make known the Divine authority on which this inestimable Institutionrests.

The Elders, Deacons and other church members within our bounds,

can, in this matter, be made instruments in the accomplishment of a vast work in the cause of Christ by their conscientious teaching and careful example; and your Committee would especially commend to the attention of masters, employers and superiors of every kind, the importance of principle and system in all their action on this subject.

They who act through others, or permit to be done what they can lawfully prevent, are in morals as well as law, responsible for this action; and the command to remember and keep holy the Sabbath day, a part of the eternal and unalterable moral law of a holy and immutable God, is to the man, his son, his daughter, his man-servant, his maid-servant, his cattle and the stranger within his gates.

(2.) To aid in causing the Sabbath to be properly and religiously observed, as well as to promote the success of the gospel and the extension of the church, your Committee recommend general and persevering efforts on the part of Elders and Deacons, to establish and keep up Sunday Schools for the religious instruction of all ages, classes and colors of the people.

Such exertions should be made not only within the bounds of every church organization, but in all places where members of our communion are located; and while this is a work in which all ages and sexes can actively engage, for the glory of the Redeemer, it is thus admirably calculated to develope and strengthen the energies of the lay element of the church.

(3.) While your Committee is able to congratulate their brethren on the appearance, within our bounds, of a new and more healthy spirit, as far as the expression of theory and opinion is concerned, on the subject of Domestic Missions, they cannot hope for any great results in action until this sentiment extends to the foreign field.

The spirit of Missions is one and indivisible; and whoever has a truly christian desire for the conversion of one soul, from motives inspired by the Holy Ghost, and intimately connected with the glory of the Great Head of the church, will earnestly long for the salvation of all his race.

The Gospel is the power of God unto the salvation of souls; and however incredible it may seem to the carnal mind that the simple means committed to the church should be effectual to the conversion of the millions of the heathen world from darkness to light, the christian is not permitted to see any difficulty in the way, but the want of faith in the church.

The regeneration of one soul, in any place, and under any external cir

cumstances, is a mystery and miracle as great as the conversion of every barbarous descendant of Adam ; and while God acts on eternal counsels and immutable decrees, these are forever veiled from the scrutiny of His creatures, His co-workers among whom, in the system of grace, are plainly, positively and solemnly commanded to "go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." This absolute, unconditional and unchangeable commandment, implies the exertion at all times, in all places, and under all circumstances, of every nerve and fibre of the church to send the glad tidings of a risen Saviour, to every member of the human race ; and the christian communion or association that acts on the idea that it is only required to hold its own, or increase in the place where it is planted, violates the plainest principles of the Gospel it professes, and so far from being able to maintain its existence, or add to its power at home, must inevitably, sooner or later, be swept away.

The church, like the widow woman of Sarepta, lives by giving of its handful to those whom God commands it to feed ; and your Committee are disposed freely to express the opinion that we cannot expect our great and Heaven-favored Republic to be continued in its power and privileges, unless the christian public make more general and determined effort, and at much greater sacrifice, to follow its protecting flag into every part of the world, with the Missionaries of the Cross.

It ought to be a source of deep humiliation to every member of this body, and to all whom they represent, that a Synod planted by the Great Head of the church in a most favored land, and so long continued in existence under so many circumstances of mercy, with a numerous and intelligent membership, blessed with peace, with worldly means, with ease and comfort, has in all the heathen world but three missionaries, two of whom are scarcely known by name to a large portion of our members.

And your Committee would add that it is not merely money which the Elder, Deacon and private christian is called on to contribute to the cause of Missions; but all should pray and labor with faith and with practical, fixed and anxious desire for the conversion of the world, dedicating their sons to God in the ministry, and indicating by all their habits that they are strangers and pilgrims on earth, kept here as ambassadors of Christ, to make known the glorious plan of grace through a crucified and risen Redeemer, and to warn, exhort and entreat all men to fly from the wrath to come.

Your Committee feel that it is of little avail to lament the want of men for the home and foreign missionary field, or to seek pecuniary means, as the inducements to call forth the requisite number of properly qualified laborers; but the consciences of individual members of the church must be touched with a more just and solemn sense of their personal responsibilities, and our youth from earliest infancy be made to feel that the object nearest to the parental heart is not, as alas! it now too common that they should live in ease and honor in the world, or shine as lights in those professions and walks held in high esteem by the carnal mind, but that they might be disciples of Christ, that they might have names in His Book of Life, and places of usefulness and sacrifice in His church on earth.

This whole subject your Committee commend to the most earnest and solemn consideration of this Convention, and they venture to express the hope that this body will in turn devise means for pressing the matter on the prayerful and continued attention of all the members of the Synod.

Your Committee cannot close this Report without an allusion to the troubled aspect of the times, at home and abroad; and they would respectfully, earnestly and affectionately exhort the followers of Christ here, and throughout the bounds of our Synod, to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God, and confessing their own sins and the sins of their people, acknowledge Him, in private and in public, in the church, and in their secular walks, in the family and congregational prayer-meeting, acknowledge Him as the God of Nations, and the God of Providence, the omni-present and ever-present Ruler of all things, and implore His merciful guidance in the councils of our State and Nation, and His continued favor to our people and to their posterity.

Your Committee would conclude their Report by recommending its adoption and that of the appended Resolutions:

C. H. WILEY, *Chairman.*

RESOLUTIONS OFFERED BY THE COMMITTEE.

1. *Resolved*, That we earnestly and affectionately recommend to all the members of the church within our bounds, solemnly and prayerfully to enquire into the causes of the slow progress which the church has made in occupying the waste places within the bounds of the Synod, and in sending the Gospel to the Heathen world, while we have been blessed with a learned and godly ministry, with peace and union among ourselves, and with abundant worldly means.

2. *Resolved*, That with deep humility, we are constrained to confess the opinion that we can find

sufficient reason for this want of progress in causes which now deserve the attention of all, to wit: The want of interest in, and the failure to make sacrifices for the foreign field, the habit of considering that the services of Ministers belong exclusively to the churches which pay their salaries, the worldly-mindedness of christian parents in often desiring to see their sons choose other professions than that of the Ministry, the failure of Elders to discharge faithfully their duties as spiritual teachers, and the generally dormant condition of this element of the church.

3. *Resolved*, That, as one important advantage of the Conventions of Elders and Deacons is their enlivening effect on those who attend them, we affectionately recommend that our brethren endeavor to see to it that every church organization is fully represented in every future meeting.

4. *Resolved*, That we recommend the members of all our churches, and Presbyterians in every vacant field to take an active part in the forming and conducting of Sunday Schools, for the religious instruction of all classes of the people.

5. *Resolved*, That we regard the *North Carolina Presbyterian* as a faithful and effective auxiliary in the work of the church, and cordially commend it to all the friends of sound christian doctrine, and especially to those who take an interest in the extension and prosperity of our Zion.

6. *Resolved*, That we recommend to all members of the Presbyterian church in our Synod, and affectionately suggest to our fellow christians of every denomination, in all their private and public prayers to implore the Divine forgiveness of our national sins, to ask the merciful guidance of God in its affairs, and a continuance of the peace, security and privileges with which He has so signally blessed us.

On motion the Report of the Committee was received by the Convention.

Brother John Walker moved the adoption of the Report and Resolutions.

The President announced that the subject was open for the discussion of the Convention.

Brother Calvin H. Wiley addressed the Convention ably and pointedly in favor of the adoption of the Report and Resolutions annexed.

Dr. J. G. Ramsey followed in an able address, in which he urged the necessity of a more liberal contribution on the part of Christians to Foreign and Domestic Missions; the importance of Sabbath Schools; the necessity of imparting religious instruction to the slave population, and above all, the necessity of fervent prayer in secret, in the family, and in the public congregation.

Ralph Gorrell, Esq., continued the discussion by calling the attention of the Convention to the destitutions, both in the Eastern and Western portions of North-Carolina, as to the Presbyterian Ministry, and urged the necessity of making liberal contributions to support Evangelists in this State, that the Gospel, in its purity and simplicity, might be preached to every creature within our borders. He urged the necessity of adopting a system of religious instruction among our slaves in every congregation, that the Preacher should preach to them, and that the

Elders should meet with them on Sunday evenings and read the Scriptures for them, and read and sing Hymns with and for them.

Brother James Martine made a few appropriate remarks and concluded by recommending the *North-Carolina Presbyterian* as one great instrumentality of disseminating religious information among the people.

Professor Charles Phillips made some impressive remarks on the subject of Church extension and the means by which this desirable end must be accomplished.

Rob't. J. McDowell made some appropriate remarks in relation to Church extension.

On motion the Convention took a recess until 1-2 past 6 o'clock.

EVENING SESSION.

Convention convened at 1-2 past 6 o'clock. The President and Vice Presidents in their seats.

The consideration of the Report and Resolutions was resumed.

The Convention was addressed by A. Houp, A. R. McDonald, Jesse H. Lindsay, and Professor C. Phillips.

Dr. J. G. Ramsay offered the following as an additional Resolution to those proposed by the Committee, which was accepted (viz :)

Resolved, That as soon as practicable, the Elders and deacons of each church be requested to call a meeting of the members of their several congregations and to discuss together the resolutions passed there, and make measures to put the same into practical operation.

Rev'd. W. W. Pharr addressed the Convention with zeal and ability and exhorted the members to press forward in their holy work. He rejoiced that he was a North Carolinian, that good undertakings seemed to cluster around the same place ; that the Declaration of our glorious Independence had its origin in Charlotte, and history would reveal the fact, that the idea of these Conventions had its origin in the same place. The Report and Resolutions were unanimously adopted.

On motion, the President appointed C. H. Wiley, R. J. McDowell and James Martine, a Committee to determine and publish the time and place, of holding the next Convention.

The following Resolution was offered by Dr. E. Nye Hutchison and adopted :

Resolved, Unanimously, that the thanks of this Convention, are hereby tendered to the Presbyterian Congregation, and the Citizens of Salisbury, for their generous Christian hospitality to its members.

Resolved, That the thanks of this Convention are hereby tendered to the various R. R. Companies, which have extended to its members, the courtesy of free tickets. Adopted unanimously.

The following Resolution was offered by James Martine and adopted ;

Resolved, That the Editors of the *North-Carolina Presbyterian* be requested to publish the proceedings of this Convention in their columns. That they also prepare eight hundred copies in pamphlet form, to be distributed among the Presbyterian churches in North Carolina.

The following was offered by C. H. Wiley :

Resolved, That that the thanks of this Convention are hereby tendered to its President and officers, for the able and efficient manner in which they discharged their respective duties.

The choir of the church led in singing the concluding hymn "Saviour, visit thy plantation," &c.

Prayer and benediction by the Rev'd. W. W. Pharr.

The President declared the Convention adjourned until its next regular meeting, of which due notice would be given by the Committee.

CHARLES PHILLIPS, *President.*

E. Nye Hutchison. }
A. R. McDonald. } *Secretaries.*

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